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Title:

PORTABLE FILE STORAGE CONTAINER

Timothy D. Killinger

Gilius A. Gaska

Michael L. Pyle

John C. Carlson

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Cross-Reference to Related Application

This application claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) U.S. provisional patent application Serial No. 60/453,493 filed March 11, 2003, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

Field of the Disclosure

The present disclosure relates generally to file organization, and more particularly, to portable file storage containers.

Background of the Disclosure

Various types of portable file storage containers are known in the art. Known file storage containers are often bulky and require excessive storage space. In addition, such previous storage containers occupy excessive space when open, thereby making it difficult to obtain access to the contents of the container while simultaneously performing other tasks, such as writing.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a storage container constructed in accordance with the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged perspective view of the storage container of FIG. 1 with a cover section rotated to the open position;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of a storage container in accordance with the present disclosure;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the storage container of FIG. 3 with a cover section rotated to the open position;

FIG. 5 is an enlarged perspective view of an interlock for selectively securing first and second cover sections of the storage container of FIGS. 3 and 4 in the closed position;

FIG. 6 is a side elevation view, in cross-section, of the interlock taken along line 6-6 of FIG. 5;

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of a further alternative embodiment of the storage container constructed in accordance with the present disclosure;

5 FIG. 8 is a perspective view of a further alternative embodiment of a storage container constructed in accordance with the present disclosure;

FIG. 9 is a side elevation view of the storage container of FIG. 8;

FIG. 10 is an exploded perspective view of the storage container shown in FIG. 8;

10 FIG. 11 is an enlarged detail, in exploded view, of a roller provided with the storage container of FIG. 8;

FIG. 12 is a perspective view of yet another embodiment of a storage container constructed in accordance with the present disclosure;

15 FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the storage container of FIG. 12 showing a cover section in the open position;

FIG. 14 is a perspective view of a further embodiment of a storage container constructed in accordance with the present disclosure; and

FIG. 15 is a perspective view of still another embodiment of a storage container constructed in accordance with the present disclosure.

20 **Detailed Description**

The present disclosure is directed to a portable storage container for storing and transporting documents such as files. Certain embodiments disclosed herein include a split cover assembly which allows a portion of the container to be opened, thereby allowing access to the contents stored therein, while providing a work surface for writing and the like. In addition, exemplary embodiments are disclosed in which the storage container has a reduced overall profile height, thereby allowing the storage container to be stored in spaces having a restricted height dimension. The embodiments disclosed herein are but a few of the several alternatives intended to fall within the scope of the appended claims.

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FIG. 1 illustrates a first embodiment of a portable storage container 10 constructed in accordance with the present disclosure. The storage container 10 includes a base 12 having a bottom wall 14 and a side wall 16 extending upwardly therefrom. The bottom wall 14 and side wall 16 define a storage receptacle 18, as best shown in FIG. 2. The storage receptacle 18 is sized to receive individual documents, such as 8.5 inch by 11 inch (or other sized) sheets of paper, or collections of documents, such as bound papers or file folders.

First and second cover sections 20a, 20b, are pivotably coupled to opposing edges of the side wall 16. In the illustrated embodiment, bosses 22 are formed in the base and annular rings 24 are formed at the bottom of the cover sections 20a, 20b having inner aperture size to receive the bosses 22, thereby forming a pivoting hinge connection between the cover sections and the base. An exterior side of each cover section 20a, 20b has a generally flat region defining a writing surface 26. Each cover section 20a, 20b may further include an inner wall 28 spaced a distance from the interior side of each cover section 20a, 20b, thereby to define a storage pocket 30. The storage pocket 30 may be sized to receive standard stationary sizes such as 8.5 inch by 11 inch sheets of paper, standard sized envelopes, or other common documents. In the illustrated embodiment, tabbed folders 32 are disposed inside the storage pocket 30. Section dividers may be disposed in the storage pocket 30 to provide a tiered or cascaded appearance to improve visibility of the files inserted therein.

Each cover section 20a, 20b may be selectively and independently moved between open and closed positions, thereby to access the interior of the storage container 10. Both cover sections 20a, 20b are shown in the closed position in FIG. 1. Accordingly, cover section 20a is shown with an interior edge 34 positioned adjacent the base 12, so that the cover section 20a overlies a portion of the central storage area 18. Similarly, cover section 20b is shown with its interior edge 36 positioned adjacent the base 12 so that it also overlies a portion of the central storage area 18. With both cover sections 20a, 20b rotated to the closed position, the central storage area 18 is substantially enclosed and the storage container 10 will retain articles disposed therein during transport. The storage pockets 30 of the cover sections 20a, 20b are sized to nest within the central storage area 18 when the cover sections 20a, 20b are in the closed position.

While the interior edges 34, 36 of the cover sections 20a, 20b are illustrated as terminating adjacent one another when in the closed position, it will be appreciated that the interior edges 34, 36 may extend past one another to provide an area of overlap. Such overlap may facilitate extended storage pockets 30 and writing surfaces 26 for each cover section 20a, 20b, which may allow both writing surfaces 26 to have a size sufficient for receiving the desired stationery size, such as an 8.5 inch by 11 inch sheet of paper.

Each cover section 20a, 20b may, however, be selectively and independently rotated to an open position. As illustrated in FIG. 2, cover section 20b is rotated to the open position, in which the interior edge 36 is disposed away from the base 12. In this position, the contents of storage pocket 30 of cover section 20b may be accessed, as well as a portion of the central storage area 18. If the cover section 20a remains in the closed position, the writing surface 26 is also presented to the user, thereby providing simultaneous access to at least a portion of the contents of the storage container 10 and a work surface. The storage container 10 may include a handle 38 and a roller (not shown) to facilitate transport of the container.

With the cover sections 20a, 20b in the closed position, the storage container 10 defines a reduced overall profile height H which allows the storage container 10 to be stored in areas having a restricted height. The nesting storage pockets 30 minimize the height of the overall storage container 10. As a result, the storage container may be stored under beds, car seats, or other areas having a restricted height. For example, the overall profile height H of the storage container 10 may be less than approximately 4 inches.

The base 12 and cover sections 20a, 20b may be made of materials that are light weight yet durable to facilitate portability. For example, the base 12 and cover sections 20a, 20b may be formed of plastic such as polypropylene or polyethylene. Furthermore, the base 12 and cover sections 20a, 20b may have matching or contrasting colors as desired. Furthermore, the base 12 and cover sections 20a, 20b may be transparent or semi-transparent to allow the contents of the container to be seen when the cover sections are closed.

An alternative portable storage container 50 is illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3. The container 50 is substantially similar to the embodiment of FIGS. 1 and 2

described above. Accordingly, the container 50 includes a base 52 defining a bottom wall 54 and a side wall 56 extending upwardly from the bottom wall 54. The bottom wall 54 and side wall 56 define a storage receptacle 58. Cover sections 60a, 60b are pivotally coupled to the base 52 for rotation between open and closed positions. Each cover section 60a, 60b may define a writing surface 26 and may include an interior storage pocket 68.

As best shown in FIG. 3, the cover sections 60a, 60b have different widths to accommodate particular sizes of standard stationery. Cover section 60a may be sized so that its interior storage pocket may accommodate standard envelope sizes, while storage pocket 68 of cover section 60b may be sized to receive standard 8.5 inch by 11 inch papers. Consequently, the corresponding writing surfaces 66 of the cover sections 60a, 60b may also be appropriately sized for standard stationery. Following the foregoing examples, the writing surface 66 of cover section 60a may be sized to receive standard envelopes, while the writing surface 66 of the cover section 60b may be sized to receive standard 8.5 inch by 11 inch paper.

An interlock 70 may be provided for selectively and independently securing the cover sections 60a, 60b in the closed positions. As best shown with reference FIGS. 5 and 6, the interlock includes a divider wall 74 extending upwardly from the base bottom wall 54. The divider wall 74 defines a slot 76. Each of the cover sections 60a, 60b includes a tab 78 sized for insertion into the slot 76. For clarity, only the tab 78 for cover section 60a is shown in FIG. 6. The tab 78 is coupled to the cover section 60a by a hinge which, in the illustrated embodiment, is provided as a U-shaped section 80 having first and second legs 82, 84. The first leg 82 includes the tab 78 and also terminates with a grip 86. In operation, a user may grasp the grip 86 and bend the first leg 82 away from the divider 74 until the tab 78 disengages from the slot 76, thereby allowing the cover section 60a to be rotated to the open position. A similar hinge, tab, and grip are associated with the other cover section 60b so that it may be selectively disengaged from the divider 74 and rotated to the open position. The divider 74, hinge 80, tab 78, and grip 86 are all disposed below an upper margin of the cover sections 60a, 60b, so as to avoid adding to the overall height of the storage container.

A third embodiment of the storage container is illustrated in FIG. 7.

The storage container 100 is similar to the previous embodiments in that it includes a base 102 and rotatable cover sections 104a, 104b. Each cover section may be independently rotated from the illustrated closed position to an open position, thereby allowing access to its contents. The cover section 104a, 104b define writing surfaces 106a, 106b. In addition, the cover sections are of disparate sizes which may be particularly suited for storing or processing standard sized stationery. For example, cover section 104a may be sized to adequately store 8.5 inch by 11 inch sheets of paper in a storage pocket (not shown), and the writing surface 106a may be sized such that it may receive an entire sheet of said paper. Similarly, cover section 106b may include an interior storage pocket (not shown) sized to receive a common envelope size, and its associated writing surface 106b may be sized to receive an entire envelope. The storage container 100 may include a handle 108 to facilitate carrying during transport.

The cover sections 104a, 104b may be selectively and independently moved between open and closed positions. Accordingly, as noted with the previous embodiments, one of the cover sections 104a, 104b may be moved to the open position while the other remains in the closed position, thereby to provide access to at least a portion of the storage container 100 while providing a writing surface on which a user may work.

A fourth embodiment of a storage container is illustrated in FIG. 8-11.

The storage container 120 includes a base having a bottom wall 124 and side wall 126. The bottom wall 124 and side wall 126 define a storage receptacle 128. A cover 130 is sized to overlie and enclose the storage receptacle 128. The cover 130 may releasably engage the base 122 such as by snap-fit engagement at several points about the periphery of the cover 130 and base 122. The storage container 120 further includes a roller 132 that may be coupled to the base 122 near the bottom wall 124 to facilitate transport and positioning of the storage container.

As best shown with reference to FIG. 9, the storage container 120 has an overall profile height H that is sufficiently low to allow insertion of the storage container 120 into a storage space having a low profile height. For example, the overall profile height H may be less than approximately 4 inches to allow the storage

container 120 to be inserted under beds, car seats, or other spaces having a restricted height.

A fifth embodiment of a storage container is illustrated in FIGS. 12 and 13. The storage container 140 is similar to the first three embodiments, however
 5 the moveable or distal ends of the cover sections are at opposite ends of the container, rather than adjacent to one another.

The storage container 140 includes a base 142 having a bottom wall 144 and a side wall 146 extending upwardly therefrom. The bottom wall 144 and side wall 146 of the base define a storage receptacle 148. Cover sections 150a, 150b are
 10 rotatably coupled to the base 142 for movement between open and closed positions. Handles 152a, 152b are formed in the cover sections 150a, 150b to provide easy grasping of the cover sections as they are moved between open and closed positions. Each cover section 150a, 150b may be secured in the closed position by an interlock, such as a snap-fit arrangement. An exterior side of each cover section 150a, 150b
 15 may include a substantially flat area defining a writing surface 154a, 154b.

As shown in FIG. 13, each cover section 150a, 150b may be independently rotated to the open position, thereby to provide access to the contents of the storage container 140. In the illustrated embodiment, a distal edge of the cover section 150a has been rotated away from the base 152, thereby exposing storage
 20 pockets 156, which are sized to receive documents. Retaining members, such as flexible straps 158, may be provided with the storage pockets 156 to hold documents within the storage pockets 156. With the cover section 150a in the open position, and the cover section 150b in the closed position, a user is simultaneously provided access to the interior of the storage container and a writing surface 154b upon which
 25 documents may be placed and marked. Furthermore, the storage container 140 preferably has an overall profile height sufficiently low to the allow insertion of the storage container 140 into a storage space having a low profile height.

A sixth embodiment of a storage container is illustrated in FIG. 14. In this embodiment, the storage container 160 provides a cascading file storage section and an enclosable storage receptacle while maintaining a low profile height. More
 30 specifically, the storage container 160 includes a base 162 having a bottom wall 164 and a side wall 166 extending upwardly therefrom. The bottom wall 164 and side

wall 166 define a file receptacle 168 and a storage receptacle 170. The file receptacle 168 includes a plurality of dividers 172 spaced from one another and oriented at a substantially similar angle to define a plurality of substantially parallel slots 174. As a result, when files are inserted into the slots 174, they are carried in a tiered or cascaded arrangement which improves visibility of the storage files.

In addition, a cover 176 is pivotally coupled to the base 162 adjacent the storage receptacle 170 and is movable between open and closed positions. The cover 176 is sized to enclose the storage receptacle 170 in the closed position. Wheels 178 and a handle 179 are coupled to the base 162 to allow for easy transport of the storage container 160. The storage container 160 preferably has a profile height sufficiently low to allow insertion of the storage container into a storage space having a low profile height.

A seventh embodiment of a storage container is illustrated in FIG. 15. This embodiment is particularly suited for travel and therefore has the appearance of conventional luggage. In particular, the storage container 180 includes a retractable handle 182 and retractable wheel 184. As the storage container 180 is suited for travel, the exterior may be covered with fabric, such as canvas, for improved durability.

Although certain apparatus constructed in accordance with the teachings of this disclosure have been described herein, the scope of coverage of the patent is not limited thereto. On the contrary, this patent covers all apparatuses, methods, and articles of manufacture of the teachings of the disclosure fairly falling within the scope of the appended claims either literally or under the doctrine of equivalents.